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## Researchers Utilize Drones to Study Wildlife Habitat



Posted By **Sherry Squires** | Jul 5th, 2011 - 10:15 am | Posted In: **Featured**



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A Boise State research team is the second in the country to help the U.S. Geological Survey use unmanned aircraft, or drones, for wildlife studies.

Biology professor Jen Forbey and four students spent last Thursday afternoon in the desert between Shoshone and Hailey. Equipped with a variety of video cameras, drones were flown at 400 feet, 200 feet and 100 feet, taking a swath of the landscape to determine habitat quality for two threatened species, the pygmy rabbit and sage grouse, in the sagebrush steppe.

The traditional way of assessing habitat is to walk lines through the brush to gather as much data as possible.

"We were only getting part of the story that way," Forbey said. "The aerial approach allows us to take what we've done on a small level and magnify it to help identify what it means to have good habitat."



The unmanned aircraft technology was recently released by the U.S. military to the USGS. The project is a collaboration between the **USGS Unmanned Aircraft Systems Project Office** and colleagues at the University of Idaho, Washington State University, the Bureau of Land Management and Idaho Fish and Game.

**Tags:** **biology**, **Jen Forbey**, **Pygmy Rabbit**, **Research**, **USGS**

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